

CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE

Purpose: This section explains which food assistance units can still get food benefits even though they don't meet all of the food assistance eligibility requirements.

Effective 3/29/01

WAC 388-414-0001 Some food assistance units do not have to meet all eligibility requirements.**(1) What is “categorical eligibility” (CE)?**

- (a) Some food assistance units do not have to meet all of the eligibility requirements for food assistance. The department calls this CE. If your food assistance unit is CE, you do not have to meet the following food assistance requirements because you have met them for another program:
 - (i) Resources;
 - (ii) Gross and net income standards;
 - (iii) Residency; and
 - (iv) Sponsored alien information.
- (b) If you are a CE food assistance unit, you will still have your income budgeted to determine the amount of food stamps your assistance unit is eligible for.

(2) Who is CE for food assistance?

Your household is CE when:

- (a) **All members** of your food assistance unit are getting general assistance (GA) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) cash benefits on their own behalf;
- (b) **A member** of your food assistance unit is getting or authorized to get payments from the following programs and you all benefit from the

assistance:

- (i) Temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) cash assistance;
 - (i) State family assistance (SFA); or
 - (ii) Diversion cash assistance (DCA). You are CE for the month you receive DCA and the three following months as long as you have one adult relative caretaker with a dependent child in the food assistance unit.
 - (c) You are receiving TANF / SFA cash assistance and no longer get assistance because your earnings are over the earned income limit in WAC 388-478-0035. You are CE for twenty-four months after your TANF / SFA cash assistance ends as long as you have one adult relative caretaker with a dependent child in the food assistance unit.
- (3) Who is not considered CE even though the above criteria is met?
- (a) A member of your food assistance unit is not CE who:
 - (i) Is not eligible because of his/her alien or student status;
 - (ii) Fails to follow work requirements;
 - (iii) Fails to provide or apply for a Social Security Number;
 - (iv) Is a SSI recipient in a cash-out state (state where SSI payments are increased to include the value of the food stamp allotment);
 - (v) Is not eligible for SSI on his/her own behalf since he/she is getting SSI as an essential person or as an ineligible spouse; or
 - (vi) Is living in an institution.
 - (b) If a person is not CE, he/she is not included as a member in your CE food assistance unit.
 - (c) Your entire food assistance unit is not CE when your assistance unit:

- (i) Is not eligible because of striker provisions;
- (ii) Knowingly transferred resources for the purpose of qualifying for benefits;
- (iii) Refuses to cooperate in providing information that is needed to determine your eligibility;
- (iv) Has a head of the household that failed to meet work requirements; or
- (v) Has a member that is not qualified because of an intentional program violation.

CLARIFYING INFORMATION

1. Categorical Eligibility (CE) status gives cash assistance units an advantage when having their food assistance eligibility determined. Because they have already met all cash assistance eligibility requirements, they do not have to meet those same requirements again using the food assistance rules.
2. **SSI recipient in cash-out state**

A cash-out state is a state where the SSI payments are specially increased to include the value of the food assistance allotment. California is an example of a cash-out state. No one who receives SSI benefits and/or State supplementary payments as a resident of California is eligible to receive food assistance benefits.
3. If **all** members of a food assistance household receive GA, SSI or a combination of GA and SSI the members are all CE.

EXAMPLE 1

A food assistance unit includes a GAU single adult and a non-assistance friend. The GAU single adult and the non-assistance friend are not CE because only one assistance unit member receives GA-U.

EXAMPLE 2

A food assistance unit includes two single adults. One person is receiving GA-U while the other is receiving SSI. The entire assistance unit is CE.

EXAMPLE 3:

Mom and child both receive SSI on their own behalf. Mom has a conviction for a drug-related felony. Mom is not eligible for food stamps so should not be considered a household member. As long as both continue to receive SSI on their own behalf, the food AU remains CE.

4. Effective August 1, 2000 categorical eligibility (CE) for food assistance is expanded to include the entire assistance unit if:

- a. **Any** food assistance unit member receives or is authorized to receive TANF/SFA cash assistance. This is because everyone in the food assistance unit benefits from the cash assistance.

EXAMPLE 1

A TANF/SFA cash assistance unit includes mom and three children. Mom's boyfriend (not the father of any of the children) lives in the household and receives food assistance with mom and the children. The entire food assistance unit (including the boyfriend) is considered CE since some assistance unit members receive TANF/SFA cash assistance.

EXAMPLE 2

A TANF/SFA cash assistance unit includes dad with two children. Also living in the home is a roommate. They all declare to purchase and prepare food together. The entire food assistance unit (including the roommate) is considered CE since some assistance unit members receive TANF/SFA cash assistance. A month later, roommate moves out and applies for food assistance herself. Roommate is no longer CE since:

- (1) She does not receive or is not authorized to receive TANF/SFA; and
- (2) She is not in a food assistance unit with members that receive or are authorized to receive TANF/SFA.

EXAMPLE 3

Same scenario as above with household consisting of dad, two children and roommate. Dad and two children are receiving TANF/SFA. However, roommate and dad with two children declare to purchase and prepare separately. Roommate is on food assistance by herself. Dad and two children would be CE while roommate would not. Roommate is not CE because:

- (1) She does not receive or is not authorized to receive TANF/SFA; and
 - (2) She is not in a food assistance unit with members that receive or are authorized to receive TANF/SFA.
- b. The food assistance unit is a child-only TANF/SFA case. The assistance unit will be CE as long as the child continues to receive TANF/SFA.

EXAMPLE 1

The food assistance unit includes a non-needy grandmother and grandson that are receiving TANF/SFA for just the child. The entire food assistance unit is CE because a member of the assistance unit receives TANF/SFA.

EXAMPLE 2

The food assistance unit includes a non-needy aunt and niece that are receiving TANF/SFA for the child only. The child returns to her own mother's household. Child and mother begin receiving TANF/SFA and food assistance as one assistance unit. This entire food assistance unit is CE. Aunt is no longer CE since she is not receiving TANF/SFA and does not have a dependent in the assistance unit.

- c. The food assistance unit receives DCA (Diversion Cash Assistance). The assistance unit is CE for the month they receive DCA and the 3 following months. During the 4-month period, the assistance unit will continue to be CE as long as the assistant unit has at least one adult relative caretaker with a dependent child that were previous DCA recipients.

EXAMPLE 1

A DCA cash and food assistance unit includes two parents with two children. The assistance unit is CE for the month they receive DCA and the 3 following months. In month two, mom and dad separate and move to different residences. They become two food assistance units. One child lives with mom and one child lives with dad. Both assistance units continue to be food stamp CE for the remaining 2 months as both contain a recipient of DCA and at least one dependent.

EXAMPLE 2

Same scenario as above but both children live with dad. Mom is her own food assistance unit while dad and the two children are in another assistance unit. Mom is no longer CE since her assistance unit does not include a dependent child. However, the assistance unit with dad and the two children remain CE for the remaining 2 months.

- d. The food assistance unit works his/her way off TANF/SFA and receives or is authorized to receive post employment or support services for 24 months after TANF/SFA ends. During this 24 month period, the assistance unit will continue to be CE as long as the assistance unit has one adult relative caretaker with a dependent child that were previously TANF /SFA recipients.

EXAMPLE 1

A TANF/SFA cash and food assistance unit includes mom and two children. Mom is working full-time. Her gross earned income has exceeded the TANF/SFA grant standard and her cash assistance is terminated. Since the assistance unit is authorized to receive post employment or support services for 24 months, the entire food assistance unit is CE. Even though the income limit does not apply for CE assistance units, the income is still counted to determine the amount of food assistance benefits the household is eligible for. The assistance unit does not need to continue to meet the resource standard for TANF/SFA during the 24 months as long as they receive or are authorized to receive post employment or support services.

EXAMPLE 2

A TANF/SFA cash and food assistance unit includes mom and three children. Mom is working full-time. Her gross earned income has exceeded the TANF/SFA grant standard and closed her TANF/SFA case. She receives post employment or support services for 24 months and the assistance unit is CE. Even though the income limit does not apply for CE assistance units, the income is still counted to determine the amount of food assistance benefits the household is eligible for. Two months later, mom loses her job and reapplies and begins receiving TANF/SFA. She finds a new full time job. Her income again exceeds the grant standard and she is authorized to receive post employment or support services. This food assistance unit is CE for another 24 months. **The 24-month count starts over when client leaves TANF/SFA because their income is over the gross earned income standard (code 334). It does not take into account the previous exit with code 334 from TANF/SFA.**

NOTE: ACES will not make the assistance unit CE if the TANF closes for any reason code other than 334.

ACES PROCEDURES

1. Since ACES is an integrated system, the eligibility requirements of residence, social security number and sponsored alien met for the cash program are known to the system and are applied to the food assistance unit. When the CE factors are met, ACES automatically sets the CE indicator. This by-passes the food assistance resource rules and the gross and net income tests.
2. ACES will continue to make the assistance unit CE if **all** members receive GA or SSI on their behalf.
3. ACES is programmed to make the entire food assistance unit categorical eligible (CE) if:
 - a. **Any** member receives TANF/SFA;
 - b. The assistance unit receives Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA) for the month of receipt and the three following months; and
 - c. The TANF/SFA assistance unit closes due to over the gross earned income standard (reason code 334 - YOUR ADJUSTED GROSS EARNED INCOME

EXCEEDS THE TANF EARNED INCOME CUTOFF LEVEL FOR A FAMILY OF YOUR SIZE).

4. When the assistance unit is no longer CE, ACES will automatically compare the value of the existing resources against the Food Assistance rules and apply the gross and net income test.